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C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000550

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [FJ](#)
SUBJECT: UNSC: FIJI GOVERNMENT PLEA TO DEFER ACTION

REF: A. STATE 196190

[1](#)B. SUVA 543
[1](#)C. SUVA 546

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Fiji MFA CEO asks P5 not to invoke peace-building sanction

[1](#)1. (C) The Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs is lobbying P5 reps and Japan to have the UNSC not agree to an Australian proposal to remove Fiji from the UN Peace-building Commission. MFA CEO Isikele Mataitoga visited the Embassy late on Dec. 7 with that plea. Mataitoga suggested it is "too early in the evolution of things" in Fiji for the UNSC to make such a judgment. The Fiji MFA hopes the UNSC can constructively discuss ways to manage the situation, rather than "kick Fiji out" of UN activities. We responded, accurately, that we had seen nothing from Washington or from Canberra about the UN Peace-building Commission being on the agenda in New York, but we would pass Mataitoga's request along.

Urging the CEO to work on his military colleagues

[1](#)2. (C) We took the opportunity to impress on Mataitoga the USG views of Fiji's current mess, by passing a copy of the State Department spokesman's statement of Dec. 5 and by reiterating our now-standard themes, similar to those of ref [1](#)A. (We had delivered the Department statement to Foreign Minister Tavola yesterday, per ref B, but Mataitoga said Tavola has stopped coming to the office and is no longer answering his cell phone.) We impressed on Mataitoga that the USG agrees with Australia, New Zealand, and the world that Commodore Bainimarama's coup effort is a disaster for Fiji, and serious sanctions will be invoked by many, including the U.S., if the effort succeeds. We urged Mataitoga to do all that he can to convince his military colleagues to back away from the precipice.

Mataitoga: two faced?

[1](#)3. (C) Per septel daily wrap-up, the Embassy DATT saw Mataitoga at RFMF HQ this morning in discussion with members of the advisory council that Commodore Bainimarama has instituted to help him and his designated Prime Minister govern. Mataitoga told us he and several other CEOs had been "taken" to the HQ to discuss with the advisory council how Fiji's government might continue to function. Mataitoga did not indicate that the UNSC session was a topic at RFMF HQ, but certainly Bainimarama and the military leadership revel in Fiji's UN peacekeeping role and they would hate to see the

UNSC touch Fiji's Peace-building Commission membership.
Note: we have heard reports that Mataitoga, behind the scenes, has been a backer of Bainimarama's coup plans. End note.

Coup attempt not over; so pressure is timely

14. (C) We offer that, from Embassy Suva's perspective, ref A's guidance to USUN for the UNSC discussion on Fiji is not quite accurate in its first point. Per ref C, we do not believe the RFMF thus far has conclusively deposed the lawfully elected government. Certainly, the RFMF has made the attempt and currently controls the streets of Suva by force of arms. But the Qarase Government has not resigned, President Iloilo has not accepted the RFMF's actions, and Bainimarama has admitted publicly that his efforts are meeting resistance from powerful elements in Fiji society. Thus the Embassy believes it important for the international community to maintain, or even increase, pressure on the RFMF, including via sanctions. There is a chance that will cause some influential elements within the RFMF to recalculate options, and it will give heart to those in Fiji who are striving to bring back rule of law.
DINGER